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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

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Tuesday, 21 June 2016, 11 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	Malaysia	Mr. Ibrahim
	New Zealand	Mr. Van Bohemen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Barro
	Spain	Mr. Gasso Matoses
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Gruterol

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

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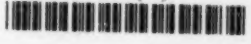

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Kuwait City.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your country's accession to the presidency of the Security Council. I am sincerely grateful for the ongoing support provided by you and the members of the Security Council.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

I am grateful for this opportunity to brief the Security Council once again on progress in the Kuwait talks and on the prospects for Yemen's return to peace. Today, I am providing this briefing from Kuwait, two months after the launch of the peace talks, which have been characterized by a positive spirit at times, and also by a certain apprehension. Progress has been made in some cases, while further efforts are still needed in others.

Over the previous period of the talks, the parties unanimously agreed on the need to reach a peaceful solution to put an end to the conflict in Yemen. The parties have met directly in several sessions and agreed on solid foundations to build on. A number of prisoners and detainees, including children, have been released. The cessation of hostilities has allowed humanitarian aid to reach areas that were previously not accessible.

Participants in the Kuwait peace talks have held a number of important sessions characterized by an extraordinary openness, and they have discussed the most sensitive issues, including military withdrawals, security arrangements, the hand-over of weapons, sensitive political issues, ways to improve the economic and humanitarian situation, and the release of prisoners and detainees.

After intense talks with both parties, during which I listened carefully to their respective views and concerns, I presented a road map outlining a practical plan to put an end the conflict in Yemen and return the country to a peaceful political process. The road map provides for the implementation of the security arrangements specified in resolution 2216 (2015) and the establishment of a national unity Government that would ensure the delivery of basic services and address the recovery of the Yemeni economy.

According to the proposed road map, the national unity Government would also be responsible for preparing a political dialogue to define the remaining steps for a comprehensive political solution, including an electoral law, the mandates of the institutions that would oversee the transition period, and the completion of the draft constitution. It is essential that this political dialogue also find ways to ensure the more effective participation of women, young people and representatives from the south of the country in determining Yemen's future. I note that the road map also addresses the need to establish national and international mechanisms to monitor and support the implementation of an agreement between the parties.

The delegations have responded positively to the proposals, but have not yet reached agreement on the sequencing of the different steps provided for in the road map. When would the Government of national unity be created? What if particular provisions of the road map were implemented and others were not? These are important concerns that need to be addressed carefully and wisely in order to ensure a comprehensive solution with solid foundations. I look forward to the support of Member States of the region and the Security Council to encourage the parties to overcome their differences quickly, strengthen their common ground and demonstrate good faith. Yemen is on the path to an agreement and each day of delay needlessly extends the country's agony.

The cessation of hostilities that was declared on 10 April 2015 has continued to provide relief from violence in many parts of Yemen. The de-escalation and coordination committee, which is based in Kuwait, and the local disengagement councils have continued to play an important role in de-escalating outbreak of violence and reducing violations of the cessation of hostilies. Unfortunately, the work of the committees has not been able to end serious violations, such as the shelling of a popular market in Ta'izz that resulted in 18 civilian deaths and dozens of injuries. In addition, there have been violations in Al-Jawf, Ta'izz and the areas bordering Saudi Arabia. I encourage the Security Council to call on all parties to fully cease all hostilities, respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, and protect civilians.

My team has pursued several initiatives to support and incentivize the members of the de-escalation and coordination committee and the disengagement councils, with the support of the Kingdom ofSaudi Arabia, the European Union, the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, Turkey and the Netherlands. This has included training workshops to build the capacity of members of the councils in several governorates. This training will be repeated and broadened over the coming weeks to cover all remaining disengagement council members. I note that Prime Minister Mr. Ahmed Obaid Mubarek Bin-Dagher and members of his Cabinet retuned to Aden on 4 June in order to support the resumption of basic services and the reinforcement of security and stability. His efforts enjoy our support. I also acknowledge the ongoing work to counter terrorism in the south, which has led to a relative improvement of security.

While progress in the Kuwait talks raises hope for the future, we must be mindful of the severe decline in the living conditions throughout the country. The failure to provide basic services over the past year has had a devastating impact. High temperatures and the lack of electricity in Aden, Hudaydah and elsewhere have exacerbated the health crisis in these areas and caused a number of preventable deaths. In this regard, I welcome the efforts of the United Arab Emirates to urgently provide fuel and emergency power to Aden.

In recent months, the Yemeni economy has seen a dangerous deterioration. Since early 2016, Yemen's gross domestic product has shrunk by more than 30 per cent. To address this alarming situation, the Central Bank has continued to ensure the import of such basic commodities as rice, wheat and medicines. Such support will become more difficult in the weeks ahead , however, leading to a deterioration in the living standards of Yemenis, especially vulnerable groups. In this regard, my Office is coordinating with the Government of Yemen, the Central Bank and certain Member States to fmd quick solutions to the rapidly deteriorating economic situation. I recently met with the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Central Bank, who are playing a very constructive role, and we discussed practical initiatives that can be rapidly implemented in order to help prevent the economic and humanitarian situation in the country from deteriorating further.

The humanitarian situation in Yemen is alarming and there are credible warnings from humanitarian organizations of a humanitarian catastrophe should the situation not be addressed forthwith. I welcome the release of prisoners that took place at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, based on the recommendations of the committee for prisoners and detainees established within the framework of the Kuwai talks, which communicates data on the names of the prisoners released. In this regard, I welcome the release by the Government of Yemen of 54 children to their families, in coordination with UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Furthermore, more than 400 detainees, including prisoners of war, have been released by Ansar Allah in recent weeks. I emphasize the obligation of the parties to immediately and unconditionally release all children and to prioritize the release of vulnerable detainees, such as the elderly, sick and wounded, as well as those individuals identified in resolution 2216 (2015).

On the other hand, the limited release of prisoners has been accompanied by the continued and systematic persecution of civilians, including journalists and civil society activists in Yemen. These acts of intimidation and harassment are clear violations of international human rights instruments. I call on all parties to halt these acts and to fulfil their obligations under these instruments.

In short, the general atmosphere remains positive, although difficulties persist that need to be addressed. The Kuwait talks have progressed slowly yet constructively over the past two months. We count on the commitment of the parties and appeal to them to speed up their negotiations in order to reach a comprehensive settlement as soon as possible.

The support of the Security Council has been a key factor in supporting progress in the talks. The parties have received the international community's clear and consistent message that a solution must be reached here in Kuwait. I appreciate the encouragement and support of Member States in reaching a negotiated and peaceful end to the conflict, and remain profoundly grateful to the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the League of Arab States. I also extend my sincere and utmost gratitude to the Amir of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, for his generous and steadfast support, and for the staunch efforts of the Government and the people of Kuwait in hosting the talks, as well as for all the facilities they continue to provide. We expect nothing less from that State, which has always sponsored initiatives in the service of peace and humankind.

Yemenis are watching the developments in the peace talks in Kuwait with great hope and impatience. The people of Yemen have experienced the indignity and suffering of war for too long. I am confident that the unprecedented international support for the ongoing process will encourage the different parties to overcome obstacles and difficulties and reach a comprehensive political agreement. Over the past weeks, the delegations of the Government of Yemen, the General Popular Congress and Ansar Allah have demonstrated a true commitment to make peace, as well as political wisdom in the negotiations, which did not shy away from broaching sensitive and complicated issues. We have to recognize that any agreement that emerges from the Kuwait peace talks will do so in a very difficult context, and its implementation will pose a serious challenge. Yemenis should listen to their patriotic and political conscience and ensure implementation for the sake of the national interest.

Within the next few days, I will provide the Yemeni parties with a written proposal for the upcoming stage. The peace agreement we seek will restore security and stability for Yemen and will constitute a sign of hope for the Middle East, which is beset by a series of regional and international disputes. The parties to the negotiations now have the responsibility to find a political solution for the pending issues, which mainly concern the timeline and the sequencing of the different steps. I call on all parties to show political courage and make their national interests prevail by making the necessary concessions to reach a comprehensive agreement that safeguards the safety and security of Yemen and its citizens and ensures the well-being of the country.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Ahmed for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

Mr. Alyemany (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin, Sir, by warmly congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We also very much appreciate the skill with which the Ambassador of Egypt led the Council during the previous month. I would like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his teadfast efforts in the process in Kuwait. We await his visit in the next few days to lend greater impetus to the efforts to establish lasting peace in Yemen. The Government of Yemen also expresses its gratitude to the Emir, the Government and the people of Kuwait for their outstanding efforts to promote peace in Yemen. Those efforts will remain etched in the memory of future generations of Yemenis.

Since the announcement by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, on 18 April, of the date for negotiations, in spite of the circumstances surrounding the negotiations, the Government of Yemen has actively committed itself to furthering the efforts of Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. In the next few days, we will examine all the documents submitted by the Special Envoy in accordance with the Kuwait plan. That plan is based on the constant position of the United Nations on the crisis in Yemen, namely, that it be based on the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its associated implementation mechanism as well as the relevant resolutions of the Council, in particular resolution 2216 (2015).

We have great faith in the people of Yemen and in our Constitution, as well an awareness of our legal responsibility, in the face of the suffering of our people, to put an end to the tragedy, which has been taking place for a year and a half and is the result of a coup d'état against the legal constitutional Government. That has led to significant destruction and diminished our country's resources, thereby setting back our development.

Over the past few days, we have considered the ideas put forward by the Special Envoy, in particular with regard to withdrawal, the need to release all detainees and re-establishing State authority so that the political process can resume on the basis of the general framework. We have also considered the five major

points on which the Kuwait negotiations are based. Those negotiations have faced serious significant challenges that have to do with the lack of seriousness demonstrated by those who carried out the coup d'état. They must renounce the unilateral measures that they continue to undertake.

What we have proposed in Kuwait amounts to a path to lasting peace, not half measures, which could lead to a resumption of the crisis in Yemen and result in the kinds of risks that could threaten the existence of our country and stability in the Gulf and the Arabian peninsula. The road map must include the following elements.

There is a need to withdraw heavy weapons and return them to State authority in all areas of the country. The Houthi militias must withdraw and rejoin the relevant military and security institutions. All measures adopted in the constitutional statement following the coup d'état must be rescinded. And State institutions must be fully re-established. Those are the preconditions for expanding State authority and resuming the political process that the Houthi coup d'état disrupted, so that the transitional period can resume and we can hold elections to establish a federal State and usher in a new Yemen.

The peace to which we aspire would mean an end to the destructive war that has impacted our people. From the moment the negotiations in Kuwait began, we have called for a full cessation of hostilities in all of Yemen's provinces. Since 10 April, we have sought to promote the work of the De-escalation and Coordination Committee. However, the other side has continued to wage war without pause and to carry out assaults on all fronts, while the Houthi militias have continued their attacks in the southern provinces.

On 3 June, I sent the Secretary-General a request for intervention on behalf of the Government of Yemen to counter the massacres carried out by the Houthi and pro-Saleh militias at the public market in Ta'izz, where 60 women and children were killed. The war criminals, who killed women, children and the elderly in Ta'izz, will be prosecuted under national and international law. The perpetrators of these crimes include General Abdullah Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, the military commander of the Houthi militias; Brigadier General Hamoud Ahmed Dahmash, head of the Twenty-Second Armoured Brigade of the Republican Guard, General Zakaria Al-Muta'h, Commander of the Republican Guard; and General Hamoud Al-Harithi, Commander of Central Security Forces.

Since their capture of Sana'a, rebel forces have worked systematically to destroy the national economy by wasting approximately $5 billion in foreign currency, which they stole from the reserves of the Central Bank, to support their criminal actions against our people. The rebel forces tried to manipulate the derivatives prices for oil in order to make money on the black market. We have undeniable evidence of the earnings collected by the militias, as well as of the illegal funds they obtained by using trucks to transport oil under the pretext of supporting the war effort.

With regard to the fight against terrorism, in May and June the Houthi and pro-Saleh militias released some 52 Al-Qaida elements who had been incarcerated in national prisons. Recently, the remaining prisoners, terrorist elements who had already been sentenced to prison, were also released. This clearly illustrates the close links between Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and the Houthi and pro-Saleh militias. This is particularly troubling since Al-Qaida controlled the port of Al-Mukalla and was involved in the smuggling of weapons and oil to benefit the militias. The Yemeni Government, together with the coalition forces and Yemen's partners, coordinated the fight against terrorism in order to carry out fatal attacks against Al-Qaida in Al-Mukalla and all other positions in which Al-Qaida was deployed in the southern province of Yemen. The Yemeni Government will continue to pursue Al-Qaida and Da'esh forces and will provide the legal evidence of the link between those forces and the terrorists.

In conclusion, I would like to draw the Council's attention to the suffering of the activists, journalists and politicians who were detained by the Houthi militias in certain regions under their control. The militias reject the freedom of expression and their prisons and detention centres are overflowing with thousands of prisoners who are subjected to bodily and psychological torture. Many families do not know where their sons are detained or the status of their health, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In a gesture of good faith and in order to comply with the request of the Special Envoy, during the month of Ramadan the Government released some victims. We call on the Council to continue to put pressure on the militias to release Major-General Mahmoud

al-Subaihi, Minister of Defence of Yemen, and all individuals under house arrest or arbitrarily detained, in accordance with sub-paragraph (f) of paragraph 1 of resolution 2216 (2015).

Lastly, we reaffirm our determination to work towards achieving a lasting peace in Yemen, based on the negotiations in Kuwait, which are being conducted by the Special Envoy. We would also like to thank the Gulf Cooperation Council and in particular the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its historic position in support of Yemen.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.